

Be Connected: Schools and academy trusts July 2025

10 July 2025

Welcome to this academic year's last edition of Be Connected for schools and academy trusts.

In this issue we consider what the spending review means for the sector, reflect on the changing perspectives highlighted by our latest school leaders survey, explore the latest guidance issued by the DfE, and new legislation relating to the use and management of data.

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New policy and sector developments

What does the Spending Review 2025 mean for schools?

While the Spending Review included a welcome increase in the education budget, it amounts to a 0.4% increase per annum in the core schools budget. Prioritisation of other departments means the increase in the education budget doesn't make the top five departmental spending increases in percentage terms.

We consider the implications of the review, and also in this supporting article provide some additional sector context, drawing on the perspectives of school and trust leaders on their financial stability.

[Read more](#) →

School leaders share changing views on government policy

The clear sense from our latest Schools Leaders Survey is that perspectives on the impact of government policy have shifted from neutrality to dissatisfaction.

Our survey has always reported concerns around funding, but now, more than ever, the financial backdrop permeates throughout. In this edition, we've taken deeper dives into schools' experiences; managing pupil exclusions and their views on early years provision in the wake of the Secretary of State making this a key investment area.

[Read more](#) →

Addressing the gender pay gap in school trusts

A new report has found that the 2024 gender pay gap statistics for school trusts show promising progress. The 'gender pay gap in school trusts' report was published by the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) in partnership with Browne Jacobson and Brightmine.

The research shows that the school trust sector is ahead of many other industries, with the median gender pay gap at just 3.3%, which is a significant improvement over previous years and significantly better than the national median of 8.6%.

[Read more](#) →

Understanding the public inquiry on child sexual exploitation

There's to be a national public inquiry into child sexual exploitation, to uncover the facts and identify potential solutions, with the ultimate goal of preventing future occurrences. In this guide, we look at what your responsibilities are if your organisation is called upon to participate.

[Read more](#) →

Exploring the benefits of diversity in school and trust governance

We're continuing our campaign supporting the work of the National Governance Association (NGA) to champion the benefits of improving diversity in school governing boards.

Diversity in school governing boards is crucial. It allows pupils to see themselves reflected in their leaders, while it helps parents and staff to see that actions are considerate of varied perspectives. Hear from a range of guests from across the sector share their experiences of where a diverse board has brought new thinking; challenging conventional processes to enable continuous improvement.

[Read more](#) →

Legal and regulatory developments

Academy Trust Handbook 2025: Managing public money

The latest edition of the Academy Trust Handbook was published on 25 June 2025 and will be in effect from 1 September 2025.

In this briefing, rather than list all the changes the DfE has already addressed in its guidance, we offer our own thoughts and reflections on some of the key themes from the new Handbook the trustees and executive team may wish to consider.

[Read more](#) →

The Data Act 2025: What do schools need to know?

The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 was first introduced to parliament in October 2024 and has now obtained Royal Assent. While the new act is by no means a revolution in data protection legislation as we know it, there are some refinements to the current law, which will impact schools' and trusts' data protection compliance.

We understand that navigating new legislation can create unease, so we've prepared five key takeaways for schools and trusts.

[Read more](#) →

New DfE AI guidance: A welcome start

The Department for Education (DfE) has published support materials on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education settings.

The government's message is clear: AI, when implemented safely and effectively, can transform education.

While the new guidance sets out useful examples for AI's benefits, their strategic vision hasn't yet fully translated into the practical instructions schools need daily to reduce risk.

[Read more](#) →

Updates to academy trust governance and managing complaints

The Department for Education (DfE) has updated The Academy Trust Governance Guide, which is non-statutory guidance on strategic leadership and the governance of academy trusts. The latest iteration was published on 25 June.

The recent revisions are minimal but include brief updated information on the referral of complaints to the DfE and Ofsted. These updates fall short of providing the necessary clarity regarding the role of these and other third-party agencies in handling complaints against schools.

[Read more](#) →

Support and guidance

Key considerations for safeguarding leads

Safeguarding children in educational settings is paramount to ensure they learn in a safe and secure environment, but research shows many schools find it challenging to recruit relevant skills.

We explore a multifaceted approach, identifying the elements that create a robust safeguarding environment that not only protects, but also empowers both students and staff.

[Read more](#) →

Using AI for recruitment: Key recommendations

Like toddlers' fingers and electric sockets, the advice when it comes to personal data and AI, is usually to keep the two as far apart as possible. But what about areas such as HR and recruitment, where there can be no easy separation of personal data, because all the data being managed concerns people?

In this article we draw on the findings of an ICO recruitment audit report.

[Read more](#) →

Supporting sustainability and ESG

Sustainability and ESG (environmental, social and governance) remain high on the agenda for 80% of UK businesses and organisations, according to our latest research, conducted in partnership with the University of Nottingham.

Find out more about the communication strategies organisations are adopting to embed sustainability and good governance into their operations.

[Read more](#) →

Staying compliant with effortless policy management

Drafting and maintaining up-to-date education policies is time consuming and requires a wealth of expertise to get it right. Yet, we know how important it is to have a consistent suite of policies that are compliant, effective, and easy to understand.

With our model policy suite, you can save time and reduce risk, confident that the policies are drafted by our expert team. Here are four reasons why our policy suite might be right for you:

- **Confidence in compliance:** Ensure all your policies are up to date and meet current statutory, regulatory, and Ofsted requirements.
- **Easy to adopt and adapt:** Seamlessly integrate our policies into your existing suite, with customisable templates designed to fit the needs of your trust.
- **Save time:** Adopting our 43 core education and HR policies saves you a significant amount of time in drafting, updating, and reviewing.
- **Plain English:** All policies are accessible and easy to understand – critical to ensuring staff understanding and to successfully embed the policies across your trust.

Ready to streamline your policy management? Contact us today to discover how our expertly drafted solutions can support your academy trust's success.

[Find out more](#) →

#EdInfluence podcast: Gain real-life leadership perspectives

David Beaty never planned on becoming a banker. What began as 'practise' for a job interview - while still planning to attend university and become an accountant - transformed into a remarkable 39-year career at Midland Bank and HSBC.

David has since established Bali Consulting, using his experience to provide leadership coaching and consultancy. He was a school governor and trustee of a fast-growing Staffordshire multi-academy trust for over 10 years.

In conversation with Nick MacKenzie, David distils leadership success a deceptively simple framework. Check out the podcast to hear from them and subscribe to future episodes via your preferred podcast channel.

[Listen now](#) →

Events and training

AI at the coalface: Navigating the practicalities in education

22 July 2025, 2pm - 3pm, Online

Join us for this webinar as we bring together leading voices from the sector who are actively implementing AI and shaping its governance within complex environments.

[Register now](#) →

School exclusions: a review of the latest developments and looking to the year ahead

With a series of developments and learnings from recent exclusions cases, this webinar offers school and trust leaders the opportunity to ensure their school exclusions governance is up-to-date, efficient, and fair in readiness for the next academic year.

[Watch on-demand](#) →

New HR Pathways Academy opportunities

Our HR Pathways Academy continuous professional development (CPD) courses have been designed to equip professionals operating within an educational setting with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to proactively manage employees in accordance with HR best practise and employment legislation.

There are currently two pathways available:

- **Intermediate Pathway: Starting 25 September 2025.** For newly-appointed or aspiring managers within schools and academies without any formal HR or employee-related experience or training.
- **Visionary Pathway: Starting 6 November 2025.** A more strategic training course and is for senior leaders and those with significant people management experience and/or qualifications.

Both pathways will:

- Help leaders build a strong leadership and people management culture.
- Empower delegates to proactively manage people.
- Save money on your legal and HR spend in the long term.

[Register now](#) →

Expert-led continuous professional development cohorts announced

We're pleased to announce the next cohorts of our popular continuous professional development (CPD) programmes, which are available now to book for the new academic year:

- [DPO Foundation CPD](#)

- [DPO Advanced CPD](#)
- [Trust Safeguarding CPD](#)
- [Equality CPD](#)

Each programme is designed and delivered by our expert education lawyers and will help you to go beyond compliance and achieve best practice in your school or trust.

Cohorts commence in October 2025 and places are limited, so please register before the summer holidays to secure your place.

[Find out more](#) →

In the media

- [Do we want the same thing for SEND children? | SEND Matters](#)
- [Minimum wage: Schools risk 'inadvertently' breaking law | Schools Week](#)
- [Funding models for UK school infrastructure | Education Property](#)
- [EHRC guidance causes trans toilet trouble for schools | Schools Week](#)
- [Trans guidance coming this year after Supreme Court ruling | Schools Week](#)
- [Leading safeguarding effectively in schools | Headteacher Update](#)
- [Why is PE still interested in UK schools? | EducationInvestor Global](#)
- [I regret changing my son's school - three years later he moved back](#)
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